

S. P. G. B.
REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 40TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD AT VICTORY
HOUSE, LEICESTER SQUARE, W.C.2. ON FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, 7TH,
8TH AND 9TH APRIL, 1944.

F I R S T D A Y.

The General Secretary called the Conference to order at 11 a.m.

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| <u>Chairman</u> | - | A. Price. |
| <u>Vice-Chairman</u> | - | R. Ambridge. |
| <u>Tellers</u> | - | A. Snellgrove and K. Francis. |

The General Secretary informed the Conference that he had been instructed by the 41st E.C. to request urgency from them in order to place before them an issue concerning the paid propagandist, and seek their recommendations thereon.

Resolution - R. McLaughlin Junr. (S.W. London) and F. Lawrence (Bloomsbury) "That urgency be granted to the General Secretary first business after lunch on Saturday" Agd.

REPORT OF THE 40TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

BRANCHES AND MEMBERSHIP.

It was agreed under this item to take a number of items for discussion.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (i) - Bloomsbury Branch. "Are the methods adopted for admitting members to the Party satisfactory?"

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (ii) - South-West London Branch. "That in future each branch should appoint a committee of three for the purpose of interviewing applicants for membership, and report to the branch."

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (iii) - Paddington Branch. "Is examination of applicants for Party membership always carried out in a manner to ensure that the Party maintain a high standard of scientific socialist knowledge?"

Resolution - F. Lawrence and L. Whale (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends that a special meeting of branch organisers be called to discuss the method of admission to the Party"

In support of the resolution it was said that such a meeting would save the Conference much time in discussion. A meeting of branch organisers would make it possible to exchange views on the methods adopted by branches for admitting members. A co-ordinated statement could then be placed before a future conference or delegate meeting. A Hackney Branch delegate stated that his Branch's view was that the method of questioning an applicant by the whole branch should be adhered to.

The resolution was carried 27-1.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (iv) - Bloomsbury Branch. "That the private conduct of a member can be of serious injury to the Party, and if, in a particular instance, the E.C. is reasonably convinced that it is, the E.C. shall be at liberty to conduct an investigation."

A Bloomsbury Branch delegate opened by saying that while on the surface it would appear that there could be no disagreement on this item, his branch were of the opinion that some members held the view that the conduct of members in their private lives could not be detrimental to the interests of the Party, and should not therefore at any time be the subject of enquiry. It was claimed that the private lives of members should not be investigated, that the Party was a political and not an ethical organisation. The Party should not be in a position to pass judgement on activities forced on members by their class position.

On the other hand it was said that conduct outside the provisions of the Rules and D. of P. might be detrimental to the Party.

Resolution - C. West (Hackney) and S. Leight (Marylebone) "In future as has previously been the case actions detrimental to the interests of the Party be interpreted to mean those actions which are in defiance of Party Rules and Principles" Lost 7-17.

Resolution - L. Whale and F. Lawrence "That the private conduct of a member can be of serious injury to the Party, and if, in a particular instance the E.C. is reasonably convinced that it is, the E.C. shall be at liberty to conduct an investigation"

A delegate asked the Conference to oppose the resolution on the grounds that while its wording seemed harmless, the spirit of it would lead to unnecessary and harmful enquiries into the private activities of members.

The resolution was lost 15-24.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (v) - South-West London Branch. "That the attention of members be particularly drawn to Rule 2 as incorporated in the Membership Card."

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (vii) - South-West London Branch. "That the Rule Book be incorporated in the Membership Card, and a charge of 3d. be made."

Item for discussion (vii) was moved as a resolution by R. McLaughlin Junr. and F. Welker (S.W. London).

The S.W. London delegates claimed that it would be of value if members had at all times the rules with them in their membership cards. In practice it had been found that when the rules were discussed very few members had them with them. In opposition the question of cost was raised, and also that those members who did not at present carry rule books would probably be found not to carry their membership cards either.

The resolution was lost 15-21.

(c) Discussion Groups. A member from Bristol said that members in his area had been grateful for the assistance given by Chiswick Branch, and suggested that other branches might "adopt" provincial discussion groups. The Central Branch Secretary gave his view that while branch help was of value, the "adoption" of groups by branches would make the organising work more involved and complicated with unnecessary duplication.

(d) Report of Central Organiser.

Resolution - I. Groves (Chiswick) and Bell (Tottenham) "That the Central Organiser's report be referred back"

It was claimed that the report was not of work done, but appeared to have been drawn from branch forms "C". No reference was made of a previous Party instruction that the Central Organiser should maintain closer contact with branches. Delegates also criticised the C.O.'s statement on branches with members in arrears with dues, stating that this apparent weakness could have easily been explained by reference to the branches concerned.

In answer to a question the General Secretary said that to his knowledge there were no "Terms of Reference" in existence for the Central Organiser.

In opposition to the resolution it was said that the report of the Central Organiser's work was to be found in the remainder of the E.C. report. If no terms of reference were in existence and consequently no instructions as to the C.O.'s duties, the report should not be referred back. The Central Organiser stated that there were in fact terms of reference for him; and in theory he

should act ex officio on all sub-committees. It was not physically possible to visit all branches, and if he were to report fully the Conference Agenda would be unduly lengthened. Branches had an opportunity of explaining arrears of dues in the remarks column of the form "C".

The resolution was lost 14-25.

Resolution - Lawrence and J. D'Arcy (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference places on record that the statement in the Central Organiser's report regarding branches and arrears of dues was drawn up without contacting the branches concerned on the matter" Lost 16-17.

Resolution - R. McLaughlin Junr. and Walker "That the Central Organiser report to the E.C. on what action he has taken to give effect to the 1943 Conference instruction to pay closer personal attention to branches" Cd. 5-2.

PROPAGANDA.

(a) 1943 Delegate Meeting recommendation on further full-time propagandist. Under this item the Conference considered the request from the 41st E.C. to state if they were in favour of the immediate appointment of a paid provincial propagandist/organiser.

Resolution - McLaughlin Junr. and Walker "That this Conference is in favour of the immediate appointment of a paid provincial propagandist/organiser"

Amendment - Leight and Fenwick (Marylebone) "That this Conference does not consider that the time is ripe for the appointment of a full-time paid provincial propagandist/organiser but recommends the immediate appointment of a paid propagandist whose work will be mainly in London and will occasionally be available in the provinces"

In support of the resolution it was claimed that London was already well provided for by propagandists. The report on Discussion Groups showed the need for sustained propaganda. A delegate said that from his experience he had found that there was a great need in the provinces for Socialist propaganda.

In support of the amendment it was pointed out that the last Delegate Meeting had recommended the appointment of a full-time paid propagandist, the view being that the Party needed another paid speaker on the same lines as the present one. The Delegate Meeting knew what it wanted and the appointment of a propagandist, the value of whose work we could know beforehand, was preferable to the appointment of someone whose success would be uncertain. The amendment would not preclude such a propagandist going occasionally to the provinces. Discussion Groups had been successful because they were near London where propagandists were available.

It was claimed that the latter argument really operated in favour of the resolution.

The amendment was lost 3-32. The resolution was carried 38-0.

(b) 1943 Conference Resolution on Post-War Propaganda.

RESOLUTION (A) - Bloomsbury Branch. "That this Conference welcomes the inauguration of the Provincial Organisers Fund, but recognising that it may not be practicable to appoint Provincial Organisers immediately instructs the E.C. to give forthwith every possible assistance and encouragement to provincial propaganda, by such means as extended tours, week-end visits etc. by London propagandists, particularly to those centres where branches or groups have already been established."

West Ham Branch Addendum. "Always providing that the expenses cannot be met by the General Funds of the Party."

In answer to a question, a Bloomsbury delegate said that it was not the intention of the resolution that the provincial organisers fund should be used.

The addendum was lost 13-26. The resolution was carried 31-2.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (x) - Southend Branch. "That the Provincial Organisers Fund be used only for the immediate appointment of a paid provincial organiser and no money donated for this purpose be used for any other purpose."

This was moved as a resolution by Bowie and Andrews (Southend) and carried 32-0.

(c) 1943 Delegate Meeting recommendation on Hyde Park Propaganda.

Resolution - Fenwick and Leight "That whilst this Conference deprecates the holding of long meetings in Hyde Park we are of the opinion that this station merits the holding of two meetings on Sunday whilst daylight permits, one in the afternoon and one in the evening"

On behalf of the resolution it was claimed that the meetings at this station were overwhelmingly superior to those held in other London areas and could be continued all through the year. The audiences were of an international character and we were certain of obtaining an audience whereas at other stations it was very uncertain. The issue was of immense importance which could not be said for some of the other items on the agenda.

Against the resolution it was objected that the issue should not have been brought to Conference but was one to be settled by the E.C. Other stations (i.e. Edinburgh) showed nearly as good results in literature and collections as Hyde Park with much smaller audiences. Too much reliance, however, should not be placed on statistics.

Resolution - S. McKone (Palmers Green) and Bowie "Next business"

Cd. 26-13.

LITERATURE.

(a) Party Publications (Editorial).

Resolution - Leight and Fenwick "That this Conference deplores the dullness of the articles in the 'S.S.' and holds that the main reason for this dullness is to be found in the reluctance of the Editorial Committee to write editorials that are topical in character, i.e. on questions relating to war, and its discouragement of writers who submit articles around this subject"

Marylebone Branch delegate said that his Branch was of the opinion that the 'S.S.' could be vastly improved. Although the articles were of great interest their propaganda value was lessened owing to the attitude adopted by the Party with regard to the war. It was claimed that the Party had thought fit to lay off questions of the war and were this attitude to be altered it would immeasurably improve our publication. Conditions had now changed and we should speak out more openly. One could look through a magnifying glass into the 'S.S.' and not see anything about the war. Other arguments in favour of the resolution were that the language used was not simple enough for readers. More space in the 'S.S.' should be given to questions of Socialist theory. Some members of the Party had stated that they preferred the 'Western Socialist'. It was not just a question of new writers being dull, but the old ones as well. The attitude the Party had taken up on writing about the war had hamstrung new writers. The dullness of the 'S.S.' was the weak spot of the Party.

Against the resolution it was denied that the 'S.S.' did not contain matter relating to the war. The Editorial Committee did not write the 'S.S.' but accepted articles from members and dealt with them on the lines laid down by the Party. A member of the Editorial Committee agreed that it would be desirable to have more lively and topical articles in the 'S.S.', but this was not entirely what Marylebone Branch seemed to require. He referred to the December 1943 issue for a statement of the Party's attitude to the present war. It was only recently that branches had really accepted the Party's 1940 statement

on the present war. There were now a large number of new writers and they could not be expected to display the technical abilities of experienced writers immediately. It was, however, good policy to accept material from new writers when possible and thus encourage them. Only one article on war had been turned down in the last twelve months, and that was one which did not express the Party's position. If members had views on the war which they considered should go into the 'S.S.' they should submit them to the Editorial Committee in written form and if turned down submit them to the E.C. The Editorial Committee had attempted to have one article a month dealing with a particular industry. The Editorial Committee and the tutors of the Writers' Class had always tried to impress on writers the necessity for simple language. Another member of the Editorial Committee said that they never heard of members who were able to write pithy articles but were afraid to do so because of the attitude of the Party or the Editorial Committee. In answer to a criticism that the wrong articles were chosen for the front page and editorials it was claimed that this question could only be a matter of opinion. The resolution was lost 5-31.

The first day's proceedings terminated at 6 p.m.

S E C O N D D A Y .

The Conference resumed at 11 a.m.

LITERATURE (Cont.)

(a) Party Publications (Editorial) (Cont.)

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (viii) - Paddington Branch. "That the Party should consider publishing approved Socialist Works with a Party preface, and the opening of a bookshop by the S.P.G.B. after the war."

Paddington Branch delegate claimed that this should be an aim for us as soon as the war was over. A member of the Editorial Committee agreed that it would be advisable to have Party prefaces to any of Marx's or Engels's works that might be published by us. A further suggestion offered by a delegate was that the possibility should be considered of an outside publisher handling Party Works.

Resolution - May (Paddington) and Bowie "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider publishing a number of Socialist Works with a Party preface as soon as possible" Cd. 32-0.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (vi) - Islington Branch. "That the possibility of establishing a fortnightly 'S.S.' as soon as conditions permit be investigated."

It was pointed out that our paper quota prevented such a proposal. Further, the Paper Control would not permit monthly publications being changed to fortnightly or weekly ones. There might also be an objection to a fortnightly issue until the Party had had an experience of a greatly increased sale of the monthly one. It was suggested that when it became possible to have a fortnightly 'S.S.', a weekly issue would probably by then be feasible.

RESOLUTION (D) - South-West London Branch. "That the E.C. be recommended to ask the Editorial Committee to allocate at least one page in each issue of the 'S.S.' to 'Answers to Correspondents'."

Bloomsbury Branch Amendment. "That the E.C. be recommended to ask the Editorial Committee to allocate such space as they may have available in each issue of the 'S.S.' to 'Answers to Correspondents'."

It was claimed that the adoption of this method would lead to much greater interest in the Party's case and stimulate correspondents and sympathisers to write to us. A member of the Editorial Committee

informed the Conference that at present most correspondents were answered by post on the grounds that the limited space in the 'S.S.' was better used for articles. A Bloomsbury delegate said that whilst his Branch did not oppose the spirit of the resolution they felt that Conference should not lay down precise details on a matter of this description and the question should be left to the Executive Committee.

The amendment was carried 29-10. Sub. res. agd.

Resolution - May and Clark (Paddington) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider the publication of pamphlets dealing with fundamental issues of the Socialist case, i.e. Parliament, Nationalisation, Reform or Revolution, etc."

A member of the Editorial Committee stated that a pamphlet on nationalisation had already been drafted.

The resolution was carried 33-0.

Resolution - Clark and May "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider the revision of all stock pamphlets when they come up for reprinting"

A member of the Editorial Committee said that generally pamphlets were considered for revision before reprinting. A Paddington delegate in support of the resolution claimed that pamphlets such as "Socialism" and "Principles and Policy" had not been revised when reprinted and some of the references were very antiquated. What they really wanted was that stock pamphlets should be rewritten and revised in a more appealing style and the references brought up-to-date.

The resolution was carried 34-0.

(b) 1943 Delegate Meeting recommendation on "War and the Working Class".

RESOLUTION (C) - Hackney Branch. "That 'War and the Working Class' be brought up-to-date and be reprinted, including the facts that led up to the present war."

In support of the resolution it was urged that the time was now appropriate for reprinting "War and the Working Class". The E.C. should not have accepted the Editorial Committee's report on this pamphlet without very careful verification and checking. For example, the statements about prosecutions did not justify the conclusions drawn from them. No comparison could be made between the material published by the "Daily Worker" at the time of its suppression and the material that might be published in the 'S.S.', and this was generally true of the basis of the other prosecutions referred to. It would be a tragedy for the Party if we reached the end of the war having said so little about it. References in the report to the various periodicals were misleading and not sufficiently amplified. No Socialist propaganda, whether on the war or not could fail to have the effect of "depressing public support for the war effort" etc. The only drastic action that could be taken against the Party in the event of the publication of "War and the Working Class" would be that that pamphlet alone would be banned. If the effect of our propaganda on the war produced only slight results it was extremely unlikely that the Government would be likely to take action.

Against the resolution it was urged that pamphlets on this subject should not be printed until all the facts could be used. "War and the Working Class" could not be published to-day with a comprehensive statement of the Party's case in view of the conditions referred to in the Executive Committee's report. The arguments in this report had not been dealt with by the supporters of the resolution, nor had they the knowledge of the Defence Regulations which was possessed by the Editorial Committee. We did not, in fact, receive opposition from our opponents on the grounds that we do not say enough about the war. However, the revision of the pamphlet should be worked on now with a view to publication immediately the war was over.

URGENCY.

PAID PROPAGANDIST.

The General Secretary under the urgency granted him at the beginning of the Conference placed before the delegates the relevant extracts from the minutes of the 41st E.C. dealing with the issue that had been raised between the E.C. and Comrade Turner. These extracts showed that the E.C. had placed Comrade Turner's services at the disposal of Glasgow Branch for a period of six weeks. Comrade Turner had then informed the E.C. that he was unable to comply with their instructions, his reason being that he could not sustain the effort required for such a period. The reasons he had put forward had then been considered by the E.C. who then stated that they did not consider the reasons advanced adequate for any alteration to their decision. Comrade Turner had, however, subsequently informed the Propaganda Committee (in accordance with his previous offer) that while he was unable to go to Scotland for six weeks, he was able and willing to go for a fortnight. In view of the close division of opinion on the E.C. on this matter, and the possibility that consideration of the continuation of Comrade Turner's appointment might arise (this appointment having been made on a Party recommendation), the E.C. had instructed the General Secretary to ask for urgency at the Conference in order to place the whole matter before the delegates and to ask for their recommendations.

A lengthy discussion ensued to which a number of members of the 41st E.C. and Comrade Turner contributed.

Resolution - McLaughlin Senr. and Lawlor (S.W. London) "This matter be referred back to the E.C. and they be recommended if in their opinion the circumstances merit it to take the necessary disciplinary action to ensure that the decision authorised and democratically arrived at is implemented" Lost 12-25.

Resolution - McLaughlin Junr. and Lawlor "That this Conference holds that any Party official failing to carry out the instructions of the E.C. must resign, then taking the necessary action to appeal against the E.C.'s decision if he desires" Lost 14-27.

Resolution - Waite and Fenwick (Marylebone) "That this Conference accepts the explanation presented by Comrade Turner for failing to go to Glasgow as instructed by the E.C. and recommends the E.C. to act accordingly" Lost 12-27.

Resolution - Judd and Leversha (Islington) "That this Conference recommends to the E.C. that it accepts Comrade Turner's explanation and that it settle this matter accordingly but that this Conference also recommends that in future Party-paid officials accept decisions of the E.C. with leave of appeal" Lost 8-27.

Resolution - Nehan and Lestic (Hackney) "This Conference recommends the E.C. to discontinue the services of the present paid propagandist if he refuses to comply with the E.C.'s instructions, i.e. propaganda tour in Glasgow" Lost 21-22.

Resolution - Clark and Winnie (Paddington) "This Conference recommends that the E.C. send Comrade Turner to Glasgow for two weeks, but that his position as a paid propagandist for the Party come up for review at the next delegate meeting" Lost 15-21.

Resolution - Phillips (Birmingham) and Lawlor "This Conference recommends that the attitude of the E.C. in this matter has been correct and that the E.C. take whatever action they would have done on a unanimous E.C. decision" Lost 10-27.

Resolution - Sanderson and Curtis (Chiswick) "That this Conference endorses the majority view of the E.C." Cd. 23-20.

The second day's proceedings terminated at 6.13 p.m.

THIRD DAY.

The Conference resumed at 11.15 a.m.

LITERATURE (Cont.)

(b) 1943 Delegate Meeting recommendation on "War and the Working Class" (Cont.).

RESOLUTION (C) - Hackney Branch. Consideration of this resolution, which had been moved on the previous day, was resumed.

A member of the Editorial Committee claimed that the policy of the Home Secretary appeared to be that he would not interfere with the activities of small organisations providing that their activities did not give an excuse for hostile agitation from influential quarters.

The resolution was lost 22-26.

Resolution - Lawrence and D'Arcy "That this Conference endorses the 'Summary of Views of the E.C.' on 'War and the Working Class'"
Cd. 22-15.

Here the Chairman broke into the proceedings to read a letter received from Comrade Turner addressed to the Annual Conference resigning his position of paid servant of the Socialist Party as a result of the decision arrived at by the Conference delegates confirming the E.C. resolution that his reason for not complying with their instructions was invalid. He hoped that any reasons that he might have to give for his inability to carry out certain work when unpaid would not be held suspect and result in an inquisition. Further, he trusted that the Party would permit him to give the same services without payment.

EDUCATION.

(c) Classes.

Resolution - Judd and Leversha "That the E.C.'s attention be directed to the need of establishing a permanent committee to advise and direct those members of the Party who desire to develop into writers for the 'S.S.'"

A member of the Editorial Committee stated that this work was already being done by his committee.
The resolution was lost 11-15.

PUBLICITY.

RESOLUTION (E) - Hackney Branch. "That the Publicity Committee aided by the E.C. shall carry out organised sales of books and Party pamphlets at the various large outdoor and indoor meetings of our political opponents."

Bloomsbury Branch Amendment. "That the E.C. consider the appointment of a committee to carry out organised sales of books and Party pamphlets at the various large outdoor and indoor meetings of our political opponents."

Islington Branch Amendment. "That the E.C. be recommended to carry out organised sales of books and Party pamphlets at the various large outdoor and indoor meetings of our political opponents."

A member of the Publicity Committee said that he did not feel that his committee was the one to do this work and suggested that a special committee should be appointed for the purpose. Objection was raised by a member to branches handling large quantities of non-Party literature and the general question of the sale of such literature was raised. It was pointed out that there were in existence

lists of books and pamphlets approved by the E.C. as suitable for sale to the public and also for sale to Party members only. The Bloomsbury Branch amendment was carried 26-15. As a sub. res. carried 28-13.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (1x) - Hackney Branch. "That posters bearing the object and Declaration of Principles of the S.P.G.B. including date of formation be advertised in all branch districts including districts where Central Branch members reside."

This was moved as a resolution by Beck and Simpson (Hackney).

A member of the Publicity Committee said that it would be necessary to have a very large number of posters printed for this purpose and they would probably become defaced in a very short time. The Paper Control regulations would also have to be considered together with the difficulty of getting the posters printed under present-day conditions. Press adverts, it was claimed, produced better results than posters. A Glasgow Delegate said that his Branch had ordered 500 posters for use in their area. A suggestion was made that a much wider use should be made of leaflets advertising meetings, containing the Declaration of Principles and other matter. Another delegate felt that the poster method had never been tried and the idea should be supported.

The resolution was lost 7-29.

FINANCE.

(b) Items of interest in Statement of Accounts.

A member of the Finance Committee said that the average dues payment over the period was 78% of the total.

PARTIES ABROAD.

Greetings were read to the Conference from the Socialist Party of New Zealand and the Workers' Socialist Party of the U.S.A.

Resolution - Gilmae and Lawrence (Bloomsbury) "That the Socialist Party in Annual Conference sends fraternal greetings to all companion parties and unattached socialists overseas, thanking them for their greetings, and re-affirms once again its pledge to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of socialism" Cd. unan.

STATEMENT ON WAR.

RESOLUTION (B) - Chiswick Branch. "This Conference accepts 'Socialists and War', as approved by the 40th E.C., as a Party statement and recommends that it be published in the revised edition of the pamphlet 'War and the Working Class'."

In support of the resolution it was urged that as the statement was an accurate one the Party should have no hesitation in publishing it. Taking the long view it would be of value to place on record the attitude of socialists to war. This would be particularly helpful to students. The Statement might best appear as an appendix to the revised edition of 'War and the Working Class'.

The resolution was opposed on the grounds of the extreme length of the Statement. This great length showed the hesitancy and confusion that existed inside the Party on the war issue. The historical character of the Statement would confuse non-socialists on the issues involved. A number of delegates said that whilst their branches did not oppose the Statement they did not approve of it being published in 'War and the Working Class'. Delegates spoke in opposition to the Statement on the grounds that it indicated a veering of the Party towards a pacifist position.

The resolution was lost 18-24.

Resolution - Hampson and I. Groves "That this Conference accepts 'Socialists and War', as approved by the 40th E.C., as a Party statement" Cd. 28-4.

Resolution - McLaughlin Junr. and Hayden (S.W. London) "That this Conference recommends that stocks of 'Socialists and War' be duplicated for distribution to branches and discussion groups as required"

Resolution - Lawrence and D'Arcy "Next business" Cd. 30-0.

ELECTORAL ACTION.

Resolution - Lawrence and D'Arcy "This Conference accepts the recommendation of the 41st E.C. that as much effort as can be spared be devoted to one or more constituencies in or around the Paddington/Marylebone area with a view to fighting a Parliamentary election there as soon as feasible"

Amendment - Waite and Fenwick "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to select six London constituencies, concentrate propaganda therein, to prepare the ground for possible electoral action in the next General Election"

In answer to a question the General Secretary said that in his view the feeling of the E.C. was that they were justified in not accepting the recommendations of the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on the grounds that at this stage the number of members of the Party in the various constituencies was not of vital importance. The main consideration was the general response being given, and likely to be given in the future, to our propaganda, and the stimulating effect that work with a view to electoral action would have on members and non-members. The Paddington/Marylebone area had been selected owing to its nearness for a number of active members, and its suitability for propaganda purposes.

In support of the resolution the view was expressed that it was advisable to concentrate a certain amount of propaganda in a particular area or areas rather than selecting a definite constituency at once and setting up the appropriate electoral machinery. We must tell the workers in the area or areas we select that we are prepared to put forward parliamentary candidates if they desire them. Another benefit to be gained by concentrating on a particular area would be that we should obtain much needed advertisement thereby.

Against the resolution the argument was put forward that it would be unwise to select any particular area now in view of possible population changes after the war. The E.C. should set up a permanent committee to watch developments and make themselves familiar with electoral machinery etc. and report when they considered it possible to run candidates. At the moment there was no argument in favour of the Paddington/Marylebone area. In accordance with the recommendations of the Parliamentary Advisory Committee every branch able to undertake the work should build up election machinery in its own area. Another contributor to the discussion said that the E.C.'s recommendation was largely due to 'wishful thinking'. The basis of parliamentary action must be the conscious organisation of the workers in any particular constituency. Sympathy alone was of little, if any, value. Concentration on either one or six areas would deprive other branches and the provinces of propagandists. Until larger numbers of workers were class conscious we should be likely to receive numbers of non-socialist votes. If there was a need for electoral activity branches would already be in existence in these areas.

The amendment was lost 6-28. The resolution was carried 25-15.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE.

Resolution - Andrews and Bowle "That amendments to rule be discussed in the same way as resolutions" Lost 2-30.

Edinburgh Branch. Rule 4 lines 3 and 4. "Delete ... 'members of the Central Branch excepted. Such members shall' and insert ... 'Central Branch members, however, shall'." Lost 18-23.

South-West London Branch. Rule 12 lines 4 and 5. "Delete ... 'full-time Paid Party Officials, and those holding full-time Paid Party positions'." Cd. 33-11.

Executive Committee. Rule 20 line 4. "Insert after 'delegates' 'Delegates must have been members for at least six months immediately preceding the Delegate Meeting. Delegates of branches formed within that period shall sit and vote only with the consent of the Delegate Meeting'." Cd. 50-0.

Southend Branch. Rule 20 lines 5 and 6. "Delete third paragraph and insert ... 'On the demand of any Delegate a card vote must be taken. The Delegates then present to record only the votes of those who have voted either at the summoned branch meetings or by post'." Lost 12-29.

South-West London Branch. Rule 20 lines 5 and 6. "Delete whole sentence from ... 'If demanded' to ... 'Branches represented'." Lost 9-31.

Southend Branch. Rule 22, fresh paragraph after line 6. "Insert a fresh paragraph after line 6 as follows ... 'On the demand of any Delegate a card vote must be taken. The Delegates then present to record only the votes of those who have voted either at the summoned branch meetings or by post'." Lost 12-28.

Chiswick Branch. Rule 23, line 2. "Delete ... 'submit a report for the previous year, and'" Cd. 28-6.

Southend Branch. New Rule. "All Central Branch members shall be circularised with the agenda of Conferences and Delegate Meetings and be given the right to vote by post. Their representation to be on the same basis as that of other branches." Lost 5-35.

Hackney Branch. New Rule. "All committee members shall be voted for annually, i.e. all other committees of the Party such as Propaganda Committee, Publicity Committee, etc., by vote from the Party. Nominations shall be made by the branches." Lost 2-48.

ELECTORAL ACTION (Cont.)

Resolution - Judd and Leversha "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to set up a permanent committee whose function shall be (1) to watch the growth and development of Party membership and (2) to make themselves familiar with all matters concerning electoral activities, and to report to Delegate Meetings and Annual Conferences, or to the E.C. if necessary, as to when it is possible to contest an election" Cd. 19-14.

Resolution - Waite and Fenwick "That the E.C. be recommended to consider the possibility of electoral activity in Glasgow"

A Glasgow Branch delegate stated that they had a constituency in which there were 15 members, but that their difficulty was shortage of speakers.

The resolution was carried 28-3.

STATUS OF PAID OFFICIALS.

Resolution - May and Winnie "That this Conference recommends that branches submit written criticisms of the Status of Paid Officials report to the E.C. and the E.C. report back thereon to the 1944 Delegate Meeting"

Amendment - McLoughlin Junr. (S.W. London) and Lees (Manchester)
"Delete 'to the 1944 Delegate Meeting' and insert 'to a special

Party Meeting" Lost 5-29.
Amendment - McLaughlin Junr. and Hampson "Delete 'thereon ... Meeting
and insert 'to the Party for a decision'" Cd. 30-9.
Sub. res. cd. 24-5.

MISCELLANEOUS RESOLUTIONS.

(F) - Hackney Branch. "That the emergency resolutions voted for by the Delegate Meeting in October 1938 be rescinded owing to the fact that the Government do not consider the S.P.G.B. a danger to the existence of the state. Further that the cash balance of £250 be transferred to the Party's banking account."

Bloomsbury Branch Amendment. "That the emergency resolutions voted for by the Delegate Meeting in October 1938 be reviewed by the E.C."

The General Secretary read to Conference the Delegate Meeting resolution referred to.

The amendment was carried 40-3. Sub. res. cd. 46-2.

(G) - Palmers Green. "That this Conference is of the opinion that it is not necessary or desirable that branches should obtain the permission of the Executive Committee in order to write to the local press on Party policy etc., and that branches should be empowered to mandate a competent comrade to carry out their wishes."

In support of the resolution it was claimed that the present restriction hampered branches in their local activities and that members of the Party should be considered competent to conduct local press matters.

The resolution was carried 25-23.

(H) - Southend Branch. "That clause (b) of the Party's Standing Orders be amended to read ... 'In the event of any breach of these Standing Orders and/or any other questions on a point of order, the ruling of the Chairmen shall be binding, unless challenged by one of the following motions: 'That the Chairman leave the Chair' or 'That the Chairman shall accept a vote of direction' either of which if seconded shall be put to the meeting without further discussion.'" Cd. 24-16.

(I) - South-West London Branch. "That the E.C. be instructed to call a Party Conference to discuss and define the Party attitude to the Trade Unions."

In support of the resolution it was suggested that the time had arrived for the Party to take a more active interest in Trade Union activity. Other political parties had made up their minds but the S.P.G.B. had not - the question should be settled. A delegate said that his branch would support the resolution because they were anxious to hear what differences there were, if any, in the Party on the issue.

Against the resolution it was said that there was no need to have a Party conference as our position is clearly defined. The real trouble, if it existed, might be that certain members of the Party disagreed with our position.

During the discussion the General Secretary read a letter from Comrade L. Lee (Central Branch) recommending the setting up of a Trade Union Advisory Sub-Committee. This committee should be selected by the E.C. after branches and Central Branch members had been invited to make nominations. Its duty would be to submit each year to the E.C. a comprehensive report, recommendations and observations which would outline the best methods to employ to present the Party's case to and within the Trade Union movement.

The resolution was lost 20-27.

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MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.

(i) - Southend Branch. "That Conference Agenda explain briefly the reasons for Amendments to Rules."

No action was taken on this but an alternative proposal was put forward that in future where the meaning of proposed amendments to rule was not entirely clear or the reasons which had prompted them, the branches concerned should circularise other branches with an explanation prior to the Conference.

(ii) - Lewisham Branch. "The payment of fares or expenses to members in connection with their normal E.C. duties."

It was asked whether the expenses of provincial members who might be elected to the E.C. would be met out of Party funds and if so could the funds stand such an expense. It was claimed that it would be desirable to have a provincial member serving on the E.C. even if he could attend only once a month. The Conference were informed that the E.C. adopted the principle of paying out-of-pocket expenses to members engaged on Party work, but of course the question could arise as to whether funds could stand the heavy expense incurred by provincial members of the E.C. It was urged that the E.C. should not be in a position to decide whether or not a provincial member of the E.C. should have his fares paid. This method actually placed in the hands of the E.C. the power to prevent an E.C. member taking his seat.

OTHER BUSINESS.

PROVINCIAL PRESS.

The General Secretary read a suggestion received from Comrade C. Allen (Central Branch) that provincial members should make more use of the latter page of their local press to propagate the Principles and Policy of the Party.

The Conference terminated at 5.45 p.m.

C. C. GROVES.

General Secretary.

Rugby Chambers,
2, Rugby Street,
London, W.C. 1.

DELEGATION.

Total possible ... 58 Delegates representing 20 Branches.

Present:-

| | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|---|---|----|---|
| <u>1st Day</u> | ... 46 | " | " | 18 | " |
| <u>2nd Day</u> | ... 44 | " | " | 18 | " |
| <u>3rd Day</u> | ... 46 | " | " | 17 | " |

Eccles and Hamilton branches were unrepresented. Dagenham had no delegate on the third day.

Collections amounting to £21.19s.3d. were taken up during the proceedings of the Conference.